

Statement by James Dasinger, fellow of the Advocacy Project, dated 2 February 2008.

I arrived at Dale Farm, Crays Hill, from Los Angeles, California, on 30 January 2008, as a fellow of the Advocacy Project. I am a graduate in political science (international relations) California State University at Northridge. Between 1998 and 2004 I served with the US Air Force as a Chinese linguist and intelligence analyst.

I intend to stay for nine months with the Dale Farm community and assist in setting up an office for the Dale Farm Housing Association and give instruction in IT work, on a voluntary basis.

On the 1 and 2 February I interviewed seventeen Traveller families, members of the DFHA, for this survey. More than two-thirds of the individuals I spoke to are UK citizens. The rest – which were most elderly – told me they were born in Ireland, but have spent almost all of their lives in the UK.

Everyone I interviewed was keen that their situation, and in particular medical issues, should be made known to their solicitor, Mr Keith Lomax. But they also all requested that for reasons of privacy their surnames should be withheld, partly because in the past Basildon council has abused data protection regulations by publishing personal details in council agendas and on a website.

Richard is the head of a 7 person household for which he is the only breadwinner. He is responsible for 2 children of his own as well as his cousin's widowed wife and her two children. Two of the children attend primary school in Cray's Hill and are the first generation in his family to do so. The other two children are still too young to attend. Richard is a recently diagnosed diabetic who gets his medication from the local hospital in Basildon.

He needs regular medication which must be refrigerated. If he was evicted onto the roadside he would not be able to refrigerate his medicine. He also would be unable to see a physician in another district without a permanent address.

Kathleen (Richard's mother in law) lives in a chalet that cannot be moved and would be destroyed in the event of eviction. She cannot drive.

Nola, 56, has lived in England most of her life. She is the head of a 3-person household. She has been seeing the same doctor for 9 years for spine problems. She sees her physician at least once every two months and is on regular medication. If she were evicted to the roadside she would not be able to receive regular medical care without a permanent address.

Nora, is diabetic and is also pregnant. She sees two specialists regularly in Basildon Hospital. She is also being treated for depression. She needs regular medical care because of the complications to her pregnancy caused by her diabetes. If she were evicted she would not be able to receive regular medical care for herself or her new baby without a permanent address, and could lose the baby.

William, 70, has heart problems, high blood pressure and severe arthritis. He regularly sees specialists in Basildon. Due to his advanced age and associated health problems, he would have severe difficulty surviving if evicted from Dale Farm.

Barbara is a mother of two. Her 14 month old child has had severe glaucoma since birth and sees specialists in Cambridge hospital which is the only hospital in the area with the specialists to care for her child. Her child could lose his eyesight if he does not receive regular medical care which it will be near impossible without a permanent address. Barbara's 30 year old cousin also sees a doctor in Basildon Hospital to treat his diabetes.

Katherine, 67, is a cancer patient and is also treated for arthritis and high cholesterol. She has been going to Basildon Hospital once a month for the last four years for blood count monitoring and other care. Her medical situation is precarious and she often needs to see a doctor for emergencies. She also takes many medications. Both of these needs will be impossible to fulfil without a regular address. Because of her medical needs she would have difficulty surviving if evicted.

Margaret, 86, has lived at Dale Farm for approximately 3 years. She depends on a walker or wheelchair for movement. She is seen by a nurse from Basildon Hospital once every two months. Her nurse is also on call for emergencies. She is dependant on home care and needs regular medication sent to her home. Because of her advanced age and medical needs she would have difficulty surviving if evicted. Margaret is the primary caretaker for Dan, her 76 year old brother who has been deaf from birth and who cannot read or write. He is under a doctor's care at Wickford surgery.

Margaret, takes care of 5 children including a two year old. She has lived at Dale Farm for three years. She sees a specialist in Basildon Hospital for an inner ear problem which causes her to suffer from vertigo. Because of this she cannot drive. She has been seeing the same specialist in Basildon for the last three years. She also suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure and depression. She is scheduled for an operation for her ear problem in April at Basildon Hospital. She is unable to move house because of her medical condition and eviction would jeopardise her operation and subsequent treatment.

Margaret, has lived in the Essex area for about 15 years. She has two children both of whom attend school at Cray's Hill and are the first generation to do so. She suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and has been seeing the same doctor at Grays for about 8 years. She receives injections once a week. She notes that before she settled at Dale Farm she was unable to receive proper care for her rheumatoid arthritis, but that her condition improved dramatically once she was able to receive regular care.

Kelly, has lived at Dale Farm for 3 years. She has a 16 month old daughter and is expecting twins in 9 days as of this writing. She receives care at Wickford Health Center. Caring for three young children without a fixed abode will cause extreme hardship. Herself and her babies will not be able to receive adequate post-natal care if she is evicted.

Mary has lived in Essex for the last 12 years. She has two children that both attend school in Cray's Hill. She is currently pregnant with a third child due in April and she is under the care of a physician at Basildon Hospital. She is unable to drive. Herself and her child will be unable to receive adequate post-natal care if she is evicted.

Ellen, 72, has lived in the UK for 49 years (at Dale Farm for 7 years). She receives a check-up for cancer every 4 months and is monitored for cholesterol and high blood pressure. She has blood checks every 6 weeks. Her husband, Bim, 72, is diabetic and has trouble walking. His licence is invalid and he could not drive.

Mary, has 3 children at the local Crays Hill school. Two others have hearing problems. They go to special school for deaf children (Ghyll Grove). They need speech therapy, which would not be available if they were travelling.

John, 74, and his wife, 63, have lived at Dale Farm 6 years and has been in England for 49 years. He attends hospital in Basildon. He has nerve damage in face, and has had operations for the problem. He sees specialists. His wife is seriously ill. She has osteoporosis and pulmonary lung diseases, and is in constant pain. She attends hospital every few days.

Mary has 5 children, 3 at the Crays Hill school. She sees a doctor in Wickford or Basildon hospital. She receives medication for depression and high blood pressure and is asthmatic. Her sister Nora is a widow has no children of her own, but takes care of a young relative who was orphaned when the two parents were burned to death in a fire. She herself has asthma and needs medication every month. They can't drive and complain that taxis will not come to Dale Far, which means they find it difficult to visit the hospital.

Nora, 58, has arthritis and an infected liver. She visits a doctor every three weeks in Basildon. She is taking care of Jeremy, 28, who has had developmental difficulties from birth.

Because time was short, the above are the only persons I have so far interviewed. However, I plan over time to continue these interviews in order to provide to all concerned a fuller picture.

James Dasinger